

# Seeing the Needs of Others Guide-Dog Puppy Raisers



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[www.guidedogs.org](http://www.guidedogs.org)

[www.seeingeye.org/aboutus.asp](http://www.seeingeye.org/aboutus.asp)



help blind people by raising guide-dog puppies.

Volunteers get puppies when they are about 9 weeks old and keep them for 12 to 18 months. During that time, the kids work hard with their puppies. They housetrain them and teach them good manners and simple commands. They take the puppies everywhere they go, so that they learn to be comfortable in many different situations. This helps the puppies later when they are working with a blind person. When this part of the puppy training is finished, the puppies graduate to “training college.” This means they leave their host families and go to special centers where they are professionally trained to work with the blind.

MaryBeth and Stephanie Paine’s dog, Elke, sometimes goes to work with the girls’ father, Cliff. “It’s the whole family. . . . We don’t leave her home alone a lot,” says Cliff. Spending so much time with their puppy is fun, MaryBeth says. “The best thing is the bond between the person and dog,” she adds. But it is also difficult. Says Stephanie, “They’re puppies and they don’t know better. Sometimes that’s frustrating. You stay with it because it’s your responsibility.”

According to veterinarian Dr. Laurie Day, their 4-H leader, giving up puppies for professional training is hard. “Even the grownups cry. Raisers love their dogs, but they know from the beginning that the dog is not theirs, that someone else needs the dog more than they do. That takes a very mature attitude and commitment.” The reward comes in helping others. Day says, “It’s so amazing to see what was once a fuzzy, goofy puppy, all grown up and guiding someone, and to know that you helped make that happen.”

**Adapted from an article by Angela W. Schultz**